

Message Text

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: UUUC GIVES AN INCH FOR INTER-PARTY TALKS

REF: BELFAST 37, 35 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: UUUC AGREES TO INTER-PARTY TALKS WITH PRECONDITIONS OF REFUSAL DISCUSSION POWER-SHARING AND IRISH DIMENSION UNDERSTOOD RATHER THAN EXPLICIT. CRAIG DESCRIBES VOLUNTARY COALITION GOVERNMENT UNDER AGREED PRINCIPLE MAJORITY RULE AS ONLY HOPE OF WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT AND CALLS UPON SDLP AND UUUC TO SHOW SINCERE INTENT TO REACH AN AGREEMENT. MANY FACTORS INCLUDING GROWING REALIZATION THAT BRITISH HAVE FORECLOSED ALL OPTIONS EXCEPT CONTINUED DIRECT RULE HAVE BROUGHT SLIGHT YIELDING IN POLITICAL SITUATION. SDLP MUST NOT TAKE INITIATIVES SINCE IT UNLIKELY PARTY CAN CONTINUE EXIST UNDER DIRECT RULE. END SUMMARY.

2. BUSINESS COMMITTEE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MET JAN 27 TO CONSIDER AGENDA FOR OPENING SESSION CONVENTION FEB 3. BRIEF OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING MEETING ANNOUNCED GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT BEST METHOD OF ACHIEVING PROGRESS ON THE (THREE) SPECIFIC MATTERS REFERRED BACK TO CONVENTION BY SECSTATE (BELFAST 28) WAS THROUGH INTER-PARTY TALKS. COMMITTEE ADJOURNED UNTIL JAN 30 TO ALLOW REPRESENTATIVES CONSULT WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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PARTIES. IT BELIEVED ALSO COMMITTEE MEMBERS HAVE AGREED

CONSIDER RE-WORDING MOTIONS ALREADY TABLED FOR FIRST DEBATE AND THAT CONVENTION CHAIRMAN SIR ROBERT LOWRY WILL PRESIDE AT INTER-PARTY TALKS. IN ADDITION TO VANGUARD MOTION CALLING FOR REFERENDUM ON VOLUNTARY COALITION AND UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND (UPNI) MOTION CALLING FOR INTER-PARTY TALKS TOWARD PARTNERSHIP AT TOP LEVEL, MAJORITY UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION BLOC HAS TABLED MOTION CALLING ON CONVENTION TO DECLARE OPINION "....THAT THE ONLY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD HAVE WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE WOULD BE ONE BASED UPON THE REPORT OF THE CONVENTION AND CALLS UPON ALL PARTIES TO TAKE PART IN TALKS UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SIR ROBERT LOWRY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SUCH A GOVERNMENT:" THIS MOTION WOULD REQUIRE TACIT ACCEPTANCE OF STRAIGHT MAJORITY/OPPOSITION SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT CONDITIONED BY LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES AND COULD NOT BE ENDORSED BY SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP). WHILE PRE-CONDITIONS THAT LOYALISTS WILL NOT RPT NOT DISCUSS POWER-SHARING OR IRISH DIMENSION STILL EXIST, AT LEAST THEY WERE NOT RESTATED AS CONDITIONS FOR INTER-PARTY TALKS. UUUC WILLINGNESS TO TALK AT ALL IS GRASPED AS HOPEFUL STRAW.

3. IN ONE OF HIS BETTER AND MORE SKILFUL SPEECHES VANGUARD PARTY LEADER WILLIAM CRAIG TOLD GATHERING OF VANGUARD PARTY OFFICERS JAN 27 THAT THE WIDE RANGE OF AGREEMENT ALREADY REACHED BY THE CONVENTION PARTIES "....REPRESENTS A VERY REAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE ULSTER POSITION." HE CALLED FOR EXPLORATION OF "....THE ONLY HOPE OF WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT ... A COLUNTARY COALITION GOVERNMENT." IN WIDELY REPORTED TALK, CRAIG SPECIFIED THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SDLP AND UUUC IN ACHIEVING WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT: THE SDLP MUST GIVE EVIDENCE OF SINCERE INTENT TO REACH AGREEMENT. THIS INCLUDES RECOGNITION OF PRINCIPLE OF MAJORITY RULE IN WHICH MINORITY PARTIES PARTICIPATE IN EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT ONLY BY MEANS OF ALL-PARTY POLITICAL PACTS ARISING OUT OF AGREEMENT ON BOTH FORM AND POLICIES OF GOVERNMENT. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH UUUC PROPOSALS, HE SAID. HE ASKED WHETHER THE SDLP COULD SAY THAT IF THEY WERE TO SERVE IN GOVERNMENT BY VIRTUE OF A COALITION AGREEMENT WITH UNIONISTS THAT THEY WOULD NOT PURSUE THEIR ASPIRATIONS FOR AN ALL-IRELAND REPUBLIC WHILE IN GOVERNMENT? IF THEY CAN DO THIS AND ESTABLISH WIDESPREAD CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD LAW AND ORDER, HE SAID, THEN IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNREASONABLE TO REFUSE

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TO CONSIDER A COALITION GOVERNMENT DURING LIFETIME OF FIRST PARLIAMENT. IF SDLP COULD NOT BE FORTHCOMING ON THESE ISSUES, THEN AGREEMENT SHOULD BE SOUGHT AMONG OTHER MINORITY PARTIES AND IT UNLIKELY (WESTMINSTER) PARLIAMENT IN FACE OF A REASONABLE PROPOSITION. "....WOULD LET AN INTRANSIGENT SDLP STAND IN THE WAY OF OTHER PARTIES IN THE CONVENTION". AS FOR THE UUUC, CRAIG SAID THE ONUS IS ON THEM TO EXTEND THE MAXIMUM OF OPPORTUNITY CONSISTENT WITH THEIR PRINCIPLES, THEREBY PUTTING THE SDLP TO

A SINCERE TEST.

4. MANY FACTORS HAVE COME TOGETHER TO PRODUCE SLIGHT YIELDING IN SEEMINGLY INTRACTABLE ULSTER POLITICAL SITUATION. THESE INCLUDE: PROSPECT OF CONTINUED PROLONGED DIRECT RULE FROM A BRITAIN INCREASINGLY TIRED OF ULSTER INVOLVEMENT, CONTINUING POINTLESS SECTARIAN KILLINGS, DECLINING ECONOMIC PROSPECTS AND AGGRAVATION CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT, RECENT REJECTION BY LABOUR (REES) OF OPTION OF INTEGRATION WITH UNITED KINGDOM, GROWTH OF BELIEF THAT IRISH REPUBLIC HAS LITTLE OR NO REAL ASPIRATION TOWARD UNIFICATION WITH THIS PROVINCE IN A UNITED IRELAND, AND PROGRESS, HOWEVER HALTING, TO ORGANIZE WORKING MEN IN OPPOSITION TO VIOLENCE. TACTICALLY, CRAIG COALITION INITIATIVE AND UUUC AGREEMENT TO TALK MAY BE INTENDED ONLY, TO USE ULSTER PHRASE, TO "WRONG FOOT" THE SDLP WITH WESTMINISTER. IN ANY CASE SDLP WILL NOW RPT NOW HAVE TO MAKE INITIATIVE. WHILE IT MAY INDEED BE LAST CHANCE FOR ULSTER ACHIEVE DEVOLVED PARLIAMENT IT IS ALSO IN REAL SENSE LAST CHANCE FOR SDLP TO RETAIN IDENTITY AS POLITICAL PARTY. THERE IS NO ROLE FOR PARTY UNDER DIRECT RULE EXCEPT AS VEHICLE FOR ITS SINGLE MEMBER IN PARLIAMENT.
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